



**Report to the Legislature**

**Foster and Adoptive Home Placement**

RCW 74.13.031 (2)

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**Foster and Adoptive Home Placements  
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## **Foster and Adoptive Home Placements**

### **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report addresses the Children's Administration's (CA) efforts to recruit foster and adoptive homes, reduce the foster parent turnover rate, complete adoptive home studies for legally free children and implement and operate the Passport program, during fiscal year 2002 (July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002).

This report is prepared in compliance with RCW 74.13.031 (2), which requires the Department and Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Children's Administration to submit a report annually to the Governor and the legislature reporting on agency success in:

*(a) Meeting the need for adoptive and foster home placements; (b) reducing the foster parent turnover rate; (c) completing home studies for legally free children; and (d) implementing and operating the passport program required by RCW 74.13.285.*

The Children's Administration:

- ◆ Finalized 1,053 adoptions;
- ◆ Has 6,326 licensed foster homes
- ◆ Completed 3,400 passports for children residing in out of home care; and
- ◆ Continues to develop homes for foster care and adoptions by completing home studies.

## **II. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE HOME RECRUITMENT - HIGHLIGHTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 202002**

During fiscal year (FY) 2002, the Children's Administration (CA) noted several accomplishments and began work on a number of improvements. Some highlights for FY 2002 are listed below.

- ★ The Children's Administration, in collaboration with Casey Family Programs, has worked on many activities to make system changes through the Foster Care Improvement Plan. The strategies of the plan include:
  - ◆ Providing coordination and oversight for all efforts of the plan to improve the foster care system;
  - ◆ Changing the agency culture to improve relations between foster parents and social workers;
  - ◆ Increasing the number and diversity of foster homes;
  - ◆ Retaining current foster families;
  - ◆ Enhancing community partnership and outreach; and
  - ◆ Increasing support for foster care.
- ★ The department adopted the revised licensing Washington Administrative Code in September 2001.
- ★ The Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) conducted a pre-audit of 88 licensing cases checking for compliance with the standards set forth in the Adoption and Safe Family Act (ASFA). DLR conducted the audit to prepare for the first Title IV-E Federal Audit. The audit determined that the department is in 100% compliance with ASFA.
- ★ The Children's Administration developed guidelines for making decisions about activities for children placed in foster care and distributed the guidelines to foster parents, staff, and stakeholders.
- ★ The Division of Licensed Resources published the "Foster Home Complaint Process" brochure to inform foster parents of their rights and the steps taken during the investigation of licensing violations.
- ★ The Children's Administration implemented PRIDE pre-service training for foster and adoptive parents statewide in January 2002.
- ★ The Foster Parent Training Institute trained 7,519 people through the classroom setting. The Institute has led the state and the nation in utilizing technology to provide training. The training included:
  - ◆ Basic Parenting Classes (60 hours)
  - ◆ Specialized workshops, including first aid and CPR

- ◆ Four web-cast training events, with 750 people participating
- ★ The Division of Licensed Resources conducts quarterly statewide meetings with the Foster Parent Advisory Committee, foster parents, and foster parent organizations to facilitate communication among the agency and foster parents.
- ★ The Division of Licensed Resources exceeded the statutory requirement of 10% for providing health and safety checks in FY 2002 by checking 16.2% of licensed foster homes.
- ★ The Children's Administration piloted the Family Home Study in seven offices around the state. This home study, uses the same format for foster parent's, adoptive parents, and relative caregivers. Results are currently being evaluated.
- ★ Washington received \$858,419 in award money for finalized adoptions during Federal Fiscal Year 2001 under the Adoption Incentive Payment Program.
- ★ The Children's Administration updated the Adoption Support informational brochure.
- ★ Washington State Institute for Public Policy completed its report on the Prevalence of Kinship Care in Washington in June 2002.
- ★ The legislature provided \$1,000,000 for the 2001-2003 biennium to the Children's Administration to support placement of children with relative caregivers.
- ★ The Foster Parent website has been an effective training tool for foster parents, with over 70,000 people logging into the system during a two-year period. Many other states are encouraging their foster parents to take advantage of Washington's training available via the website. To date, people from Florida, Texas, and New Zealand have logged on to the website for training on Brain Development, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Positive Discipline, and Children and Trauma during FY 2002.

### **III. FOSTER HOME RECRUITMENT**

The Children's Administration continues to make active efforts to increase the number of foster homes available for the placement of children in out of home care.

#### **Licensing Responsibilities**

The Division of Licensed Resources, Office of Foster Care Licensing (OFCL), engages in a variety of required activities to ensure that homes are fully and appropriately licensed. Some of the activities are:

- ★ Provide orientation and 20 hours of PRIDE pre-service training for prospective foster and adoptive applicants.
- ★ Review application packet, investigate any CPS and/or criminal history, and contact references.
- ★ Visit and assess the home to ensure the home will meet health and safety standards.
- ★ Conduct a home study to assess the family's readiness and skill level to care for foster children.
- ★ Provide consultation and technical assistance relating to licensing requirements and policies during the home visit.
- ★ Collaborate with the foster parent to correct deficiencies and write Compliance Agreements to correct deficiencies if necessary.
- ★ Prepare documents for an adjudicative proceeding, should the license be denied or revoked.
- ★ Visit a minimum of 10% of the licensed foster homes annually to monitor for health and safety and assess training needs of foster parents.
- ★ Respond to licensing complaints and conduct an assessment to determine if there are health and safety or licensing violations.
- ★ Monitor the corrective action plan to ensure a safe environment. Assess training and support needs of foster parent.
- ★ Re-License the foster home provider every three years.

### **Number of Licensed Foster Homes**

The Division of Licensed Resources, Office of Foster Care Licensing maintained 6,326 licensed foster homes in July 2002. Chart one below shows that licensed foster homes remained statistically stable between FY 2001 and FY 2002.

Chart 1

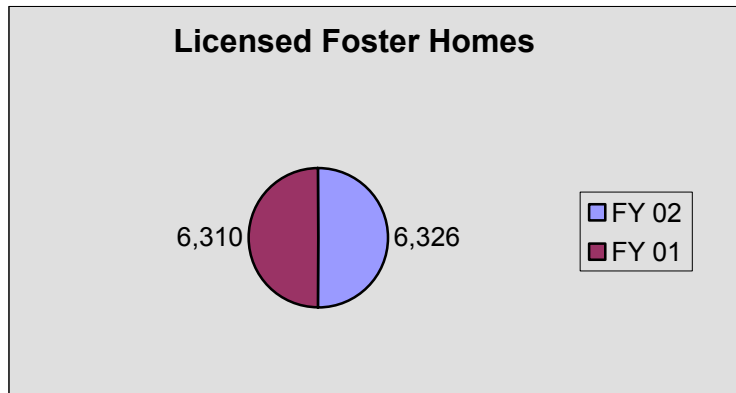


Chart two represents the total number of OFCL licensed foster homes and Private Agency certified foster homes by region in Washington State as of July 2002. OFCL evaluates the background clearances, reviews the home studies and issues the license for the private agency foster homes.

Chart 2

### **Total Number of Licensed Foster Homes July 2002**

Regions	Total # of OFCL licensed foster homes	Total # of Private Agency certified homes	Total # of licensed foster homes
Region 1	705	164	869
Region 2	520	257	777
Region 3	767	146	913
Region 4	744	477	1,221
Region 5	811	380	1,191
Region 6	1,116	239	1,355
<b>Statewide Total</b>	<b>4,663</b>	<b>1,663</b>	<b>6,326</b>

## **Partnership with Casey Family Programs**

Since the release of the Foster Care Improvement Plan (FCIP) in May 2001, work began on the implementation of the recommendations from the five major strategies identified. The first task was the development of the organizational structure. This includes a seven member Executive Committee (with representatives from DSHS, Casey Family Programs, foster parents, and community stakeholders), a diverse project management team, several work groups, and regional teams.

The primary focus of the work has been on recruitment and retention of foster parents. Although both are essential to a successful foster care program, the Executive Committee decided that retention would be the primary goal, though both issues remained the focus of work during the first year. The work groups have been building:

- ◆ New support networks;
- ◆ New recruiting system;
- ◆ Better ways to measure customer satisfaction;
- ◆ Support and public awareness for kinship providers; and
- ◆ A culture to improve relationships between DSHS and foster parents.

## **Statewide Recruitment**

The Children's Administration has contracted with Families for Kids Recruitment Resources (FFK-RR), a branch of Lutheran Community Services, for the recruitment of foster and adoptive homes. Highlights include:

- ◆ Over 191 families that called the toll free line or were contacted by our regional personnel became foster or adoptive families during the FY 2002.
- ◆ FFK-RR received 2,291 new intakes from prospective foster and adoptive applicants.
- ◆ In addition, 4,105 potential foster or adoptive families are currently being tracked in the database.
- ◆ FFK-RR attended 426 recruitment and retention meetings and made 487 recruitment presentations statewide.
- ◆ More than \$10,000 was raised through a car wash event for the Governor's Scholarship fund for continuing education for children leaving foster care.

## **Diversity Recruitment**

The Children's Administration continues to focus on diversity recruitment through regional recruitment plans and contracts. Currently each region develops its own recruitment efforts to meet the needs of the children in out-of-home care and the needs of the community.

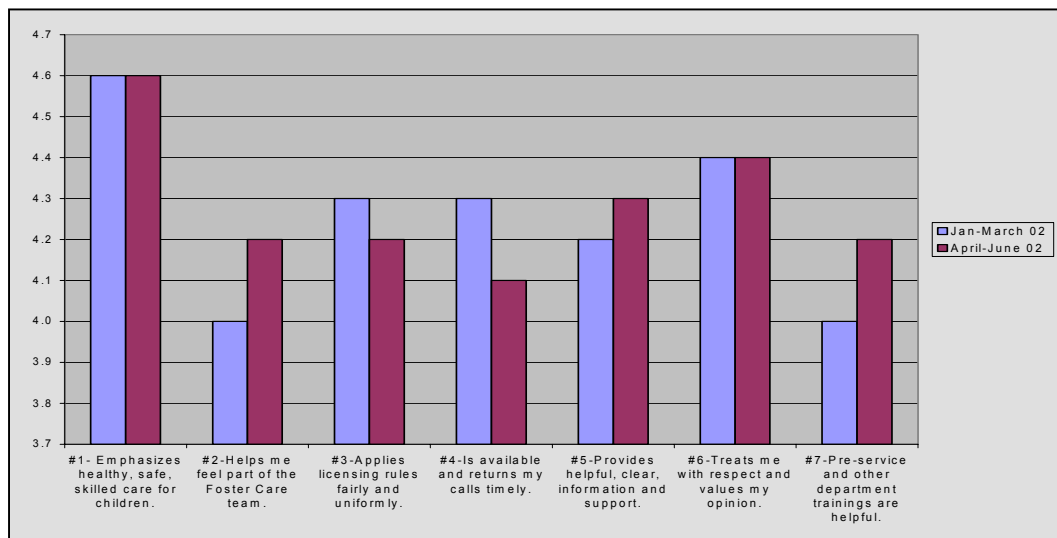
Utilizing a portion of the recruitment money set aside in the 2002 legislative session, CA divided the money among the 29 Tribes and Tribal Organizations to provide recruitment of Native American Foster Homes. A goal was set to increase the number of Tribal foster homes by ten percent by the end of fiscal year 2003. In addition to the statewide contracts with Tribes and Tribal Organizations, regional contracts build upon the recruitment and retention of Tribal foster homes. As of January 1, 2002, there were 300 Tribal foster homes.

#### IV. FOSTER HOME TURN-OVER, CAUSES & RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Foster Satisfaction Surveys

The Office of Foster Care Licensing (OFCL) staff work with providers to bring safe, healthy, and skilled foster care to children and facilities. To determine how effectively staff are providing services to foster parents, OFCL provides postage-paid customer service cards to foster parents at the initial licensing and at re-licensing. Foster parents rank seven questions from 5 (highest score) to 0 (lowest score) regarding customer service. Chart three below shows that OFCL has improved in the areas of helping foster parents feel part of the team, providing helpful clear information and support, and training to foster parents. Other areas remained at a 4.0 rating or higher.

Chart 3



##### Foster Home Closure

For several years, CA has tracked the homes that have closed their licenses. In January 2001, DLR/OFCL began tracking those closures more precisely. Based on a hand count from Jan. 1, 2002-June 30, 2002, 423 OFCL-licensed foster homes closed. Based on that same hand count, 15.7% of the foster homes closed

due to the foster parents adopting a child. There is a variety of reasons for closing a foster home license, tracked by DLR. Reasons that DLR is monitoring are provided in Chart 4.

**Chart 4**

<b>Reason For Foster Home Closure: Jan-June 02</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Voluntarily Withdrawn	71	16.8
Cannot comply with Minimum Licensing Requirements (MLRs)	40	9.5
Failed to respond	40	9.5
Family goals/personal issues	48	11.4
Failed to respond to renewal	50	11.8
Relative placement-no longer dire/require license	7	1.6
Adoption completed or no room - no further placements	66	15.7
Dissatisfied with OFCL SW	0	0
Foster child turned 18	4	0.9
Foster child's behavior too challenging	3	0.7
New home doesn't meet MLRs	4	0.9
Move out of area	64	15.2
Lack of respect	1	0.1
Dissatisfied with DCFS SW	4	0.9
To child placing agency	16	3.8
To adult family home	2	0.4
Founded CA/N	0	0
Health and safety Issues	1	0.1
WAC violations	1	0.1
Provider deceased	1	0.1

The Children's Administration is currently developing a comprehensive survey system that will track foster parent satisfaction from the time potential foster parent's contact the system until the time they leave. This system should provide data and information to guide decisions on how to meet the needs of foster parents.

A new exit survey will be developed, as part of the new system and will replace the current closed home report. The new survey will allow the agency to more effectively track reasons that foster parents leave. CA has never tracked the turnover rate as a specific performance measure. A method to track the turnover rate will be developed concurrently with the new surveying system.

The goal is that CA will develop strategies to reduce turnover; recognizing that some turnover, such as homes closing once an adoption is complete, actually reflect success in other areas such as achieving permanency for children. The goal for the coming year is to develop an understanding of the dynamics of foster parent turnover.

### **Foster Parent Liaison Contracts**

The Foster Parent Liaison Contracts provide services to enhance communication among the foster parent, DCFS social worker, DLR staff, and DSHS management. The liaison contracts have been revised to include outcome measures to guide services and more effectively meet foster parents' identified needs. Additionally, the liaisons are increasing their contact with private agency foster parents and will work to establish guidelines to support and assist private agencies to meet their foster parents' needs.

The Liaison Program continues to assist and provide services to support foster parents. Regional liaisons have steadily increased the number of foster parent contacts via email, telephone, and personal contact.

### **Foster Intervention/Retention Support Team**

Foster Intervention/Retention Support Team (FIRST) is a contracted service provided by the Foster Parents Association of Washington State (FPAWS). The FIRST Program provides foster parents undergoing Child Protective Services (CPS) investigations non-judgmental services and support. FIRST services include providing training, disseminating information to the foster parent about the investigative process, clarifying communication, and assisting foster parents in completing corrective action plans.

There are currently 12 volunteer foster parents that provide FIRST service at the request of social workers, DLR investigators, or other foster parents. Although few in number, these volunteer foster parents are important to the success of the FIRST program. The CA recognizes that foster parents spend a great deal of time volunteering for other activities such as mentoring programs or support groups and are often challenged by finding the additional time to volunteer for the FIRST program.

### **Foster Parent Training**

The Foster Parent Training Institute is committed to providing high quality innovative training to the foster parents in Washington State. The Institute videotaped training workshops and placed them on the Foster Parent website in an effort to remove training barriers for foster parents. This approach enables foster parents to learn from the comfort and convenience of their homes. Four web cast training events are available on the website. The live training has had over 750

participants, and allows foster parents to call in with questions. The four web cast training events completed in FY 2002 are:

- ★ Dependency Court Process
- ★ Attachment Issues
- ★ Working with Behaviorally Challenging Children
- ★ De-escalation Techniques

The Foster Parent Training Institute collaborated with the DSHS Mental Health Division (MHD) and the community to produce a special live web cast in response to the events of September 11, 2001, regarding the effect of the terrorist act on foster children. The live web cast was done from the Yakima fair grounds and included a panelist discussion with CA, MHD, a foster parent, and a foster parent training facilitator. The panel provided foster parents with information on how the trauma affected children in out-of-home care and how to deal with behaviors that could arise in families. This web cast is now available on the Foster Parent website.

The Foster Parent Website [www.wa.gov/dshs/fosterparents](http://www.wa.gov/dshs/fosterparents) added a new page about retention during FY 2002. A variety of training and educational opportunities are offered through the website. The CA received 746 inquiries from people wanting more information on how to become a foster parent during the first six months of activation.

- ★ Due to the events of September 11, 2001, the Annual Foster Parent Conference was postponed until March 2002.
- ★ PRIDE Pre-Service and PRIDE In-Service foster and adoption training were implemented statewide. The pre-service training is also offered to kinship providers who can choose to attend the training.
- ★ First Aid, CPR, and Blood Born Pathogen training saw a dramatic rise in the number of people attending.
- ★ There were several specialized workshops offered in each region and attended by 2,552 people during FY 2002. Some of the workshops provided to foster parents included:
  - ◆ Anger Management
  - ◆ Working with Birth Families
  - ◆ Allegations of Abuse
  - ◆ Talking to Children about Sexual Abuse
  - ◆ Attachment Disorders
  - ◆ Grief and Loss
  - ◆ Adolescent Issues
  - ◆ Special Education

- ◆ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- ◆ Self-Care
- ◆ Sexually Aggressive Youth
- ◆ Adolescent Depression
- ◆ Suicide
- ◆ Drug Affected Children
- ◆ De-escalation

## V. FOSTER CARE PASSPORT PROGRAM

The Health and Education Foster Care Passport Program (FCPP) provides for an electronic, centralized repository of mental and physical health, familial, and educational information for children residing in out-of-home care in Washington State.

The FCPP was specifically designed to identify, gather, and share health history information with those providing care to children residing in out-of-home placement. Additionally, FCPP contracted Public Health Nurses (PHN) provide consultation as a means for FCPP to be a conduit of information directly to social work staff and foster parents who are caring for these children. As opposed to a one-time, medical assessment/screening service, FCPP is an interactive service, providing progressive information as the needs of the child changes. FCPP actively assists social workers and foster parents in making informed decisions regarding health care needs of children.

Children are automatically “referred” to FCPP electronically, via the Case And Management Information System (CAMIS), based on their placement in out-of-home care. However, due to funding limitations, caseload prioritization within the general eligibility criteria has been a necessity and varies slightly due to the specific needs and PHN staffing level of the regions. In general, the prioritization for creating passports is on children birth through 12 years of age, who remain in out-of-home care 90 consecutive days or longer, from April 1998, when most of the contracts with local public health jurisdictions were finalized.

Foster parents are routinely instructed to share Passport information with health care providers when children are taken in for appointments. Through implementation and discussion with health care providers, it was determined to be ineffective and inappropriate for FCPP to mail the passports and/or recommendations directly to health care providers, due to issues around confidentiality and mobility of children in foster care. FCPP decided it is more effective to educate and train foster parents to approach medical care for foster children in the same manner as their own children, by bringing necessary health information with them to any healthcare appointments. FCPP distribution of information includes:

★ To social workers:

- ◆ An original passport signed by the PHN;
- ◆ A letter or recommendations from the PHN outlining specific health issues, the follow-up needed, and where the community resources exist;
- ◆ All medical records received from health care providers;
- ◆ If the PHN sees an urgent health issue requiring immediate attention, a “Health Care Concern Alert” is offered to the social worker to notify foster parents.

★ To foster parents:

- ◆ A copy of the Passport;
- ◆ A letter from the PHN outlining specific health recommendations;
- ◆ Assistance, per requests from the social worker, regarding urgent health issues which may need follow-up, including facilitating accessing appropriate community resources.

Chart five below represents the last four calendar years of operation, showing the progress in creating Passports for children in out-of-home care. In FY 2002, approximately 4,814 children were eligible for a Passport. Passports were completed on 71% of the eligible children. On average approximately 500 children will leave care between 90 –180 days and the passport may not have been completed.

**Chart 5**

**FOSTER CARE PASSPORT PROGRAM**  
Activity Summary Data (by calendar year)

<b>Activity Summary Data (by calendar year)</b>	<b>Passports Completed</b>	<b>Health Education Contacts</b>	<b>Case Finding &amp; Referral</b>
1998 Total Numbers <sup>1</sup>	1,573	1,985	231
1999 Total Numbers	3,860	3,181	116
2000 Numbers	3,821	1,597	137
2001 Numbers	3,104	2,486	350
2002 Numbers <sup>2</sup>	3,400	2,336	306
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,758</b>	<b>11,585</b>	<b>1,140</b>

<sup>1</sup> FCPP was implemented in offices statewide throughout the entire calendar year of 1998.

<sup>2</sup> 2002 numbers are projections, based on data through August.

## **Backlog Project**

The 2001 Legislature authorized a one-time allocation of \$1,458,000, for FY 2002, to create Passports on the backlog of cases that built up from the program's inception in July 1997. Half of these funds (\$729,000) were subsequently rolled over into FY 2003.

These funds have been kept separate from the "normal" allocation of funds for the passport program. Local Public Health Jurisdictions (LPHJ) throughout Washington State were invited to apply for these funds. The contracts for this backlog project are fee-for-service contracts, at a unit price of \$450 per completed Passport.

This project has been operationally challenging. As with the state, a number of LPHJ have suffered significant budget shortfalls over the past few years, resulting in a nursing shortage. In the midst of this nursing shortage, the ability of LPHJ to hire nurses for short-term work is extremely limited. While the Public Health nursing directors agreed that this seems a good use of money, there was no way most of them could use one-time dollars.

Seven LPHJ have contracted with CA to work on this project. The contracts do not contain any limit as to the number of backlogged passports each can produce. Additionally, participating LPHJ are not limited to the creation of backlogged passports in their own area; participating LPHJ may be creating backlogged passports for children from any part of the state.

The budget for the backlog project was kept in the CA the Division of Program and Policy Development. Since this backlog project is a one-time event, it was deemed that the following groups of children could best benefit from this project. Additionally, this list was prioritized as follows:

- 1) Legally free children (the pool of children free for adoption);
- 2) Youth aging out of the foster care system who would be responsible for their own care; and
- 3) All others.

Children with special health care needs/issues have always had priority into the FCPP, regardless of their time in care. Short sub-lists of children are provided periodically to participating LPHJ. LPHJ submit an A-19 Invoice Voucher and a project log showing the number of backlogged passports completed and the names. Once the LPHJ has exhausted the children on its list, the CA program manager in charge of the Passport program provides a new list to them. The number of children on each participating LPHJ list depends upon the amount of time it has available each month to devote to this project; in this way, CA is attempting to limit the number of children waiting on any given list.

## **Statewide Satisfaction Survey**

The FCPP conducted a statewide satisfaction survey, by sending surveys to all health care providers, social workers, and foster parents who cared for children who received Passports between June 1 and August 31, 2001. Surveys are still being returned, but preliminary results to date are:

### Social Work Survey

SURVEY QUESTION	RESPONSE TO SURVEY QUESTION
1. The Passport program contained helpful information the child?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 93% answered yes. The typical comments were “you are appreciated and needed”; “this is really needed – we will get children that have no medical records and everyone is trying to guess what is going on.”</li></ul>
2. The health recommendations made by the PHN were helpful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 90% said yes</li></ul>
3. I have followed up on health recommendations made by the Passport program nurse?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 82% said yes</li></ul>
4. I have sought consultation from the Passport program nurse?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 66% of respondents said they had</li></ul>

### Health Care Provider

SURVEY QUESTION	RESPONSE TO SURVEY QUESTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I have seen a Passport &amp; Health Recommendations Letter for a child residing in foster care who is under my care?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50% said they had not. Follow-up contacts made with health care providers who indicated they had not seen a passport for a child under their care resulted in some of them finding a Passport in their medical records. The Passport had been filed in the medical record and not brought to the attention of the health care provider.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Passport contained helpful and useful information regarding the child?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>96% answered yes (42% strongly agreed/54% agreed)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recommendations made by the Passport nurse to the foster parent were useful?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>96% answered yes</li> </ul>

### Foster Parent

SURVEY CATEGORY	RESPONSE TO SURVEY QUESTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Passport contained helpful and useful information that helped me provide care for my child?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>87 % agreed. The 13% that disagreed indicated that the child had been with them since birth, or they were the grandparent, etc., and knew all their health information.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I have shared the Passport and Recommendations Letter with my child's health care provider?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>51% said they had. This is consistent with the above response from health care providers who indicated they had not seen a Passport, and indicates an on-going training need with both foster parents &amp; providers about the intent/content of the Passport.</li> </ul>

## VI. ADOPTION RECRUITMENT AND SERVICES

The Children's Administration continues to focus on providing permanency for children unable to return to the care of their birth parents. Many of the children who are not able to return home have a plan of adoption. However, adoption is not always the most appropriate plan for all children, so alternative plans such as guardianship or long term foster care are made for some children. In FY 2002, CA completed guardianships on 534 children. For the first time since fiscal year

1996, CA saw a drop in the total number of adoptions finalized during a fiscal year. Chart six below shows finalized adoptions for the past seven fiscal years.<sup>3</sup> Children's Administration has set a goal of completing 1,200 adoptions during FY 2003.

Chart 6

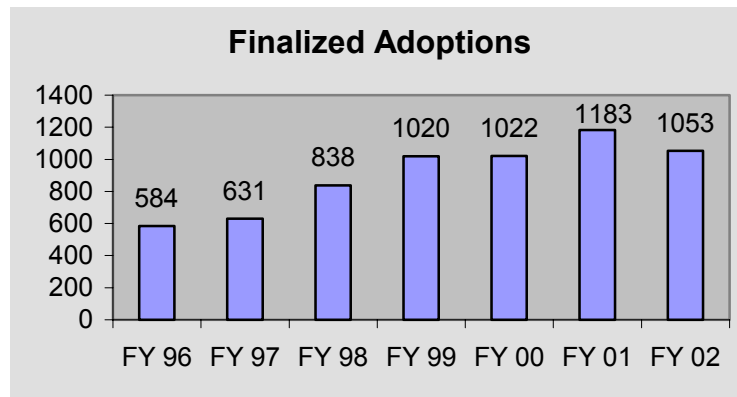
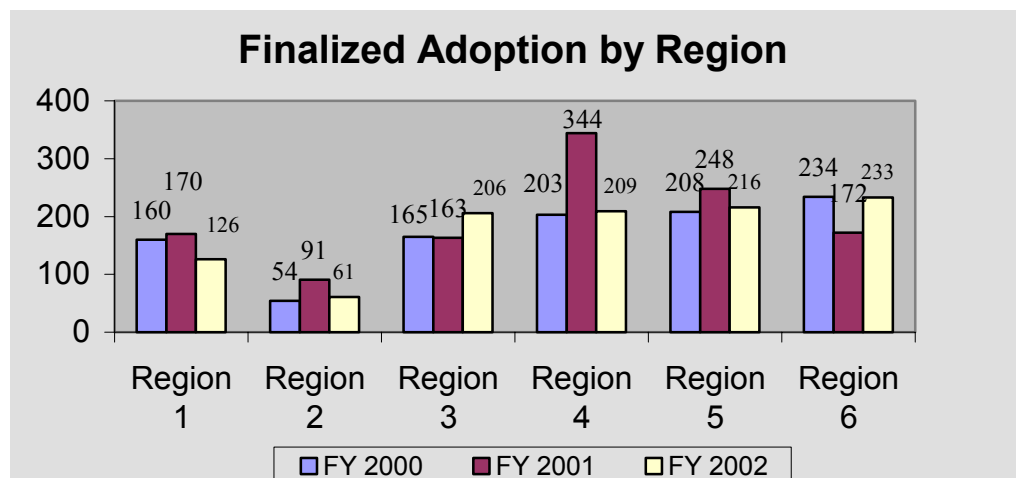


Chart seven below shows the number of finalized adoptions for each region for the last three fiscal years.

Chart 7



Many factors affected the total number of adoptions finalized in Washington during FY 2002. Significantly, the affects of September 11, 2001, touched the

<sup>3</sup> CA continues to improve data reliability and has gone back and input accurate information where inaccurate information was found. Because of this, the numbers reported in this report for FY 1996 – FY 2002 differ from those pulled for the FY 2001 report.

lives all people in the United States and around the world. The Northwest Adoption Exchange, a contracted provider, reported a decrease in the number of hits to the website and the number of phone calls from families inquiring about adoption compared to the same time period for the previous year. Other barriers include the federal tax credit that goes into effect January 1, 2003, which increases the tax credit to \$10,000 per adoption. Field staff across the state has reported that families are being advised through their legal counsel to wait to finalize their adoptions until after January 1, 2003. Field staff have further reported that following barriers: the court systems are full, adoption hearings are limited to a certain number of cases per month, and some families need additional support services prior to finalization. CA plans to continue focusing on the finalization of adoption for children with an identified plan of adoption.

### **Recruitment Activities**

The Children's Administration's focus on adoption includes providing contract services for specialized recruitment of children. These services include contracting with the Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE) that provides recruitment services through photolisting books for NWAE and the Washington Adoption Resource Exchange (WARE). Both photolisting books are distributed throughout Washington State and the NWAE book has an expanded distribution outside of the state. A child moves to the NWAE photolisting book after a child has been in the WARE book for 90 days, signifying that additional recruitment is needed. Some of the children are then placed on the NWAE recruitment website ([www.nwae.org](http://www.nwae.org)). Funding limits the number of children Washington places on the website.

The Children's Administration developed a specialized recruitment contract in fiscal year 2002 focusing on the placement of 40 children who had been waiting the longest for an adoptive home. The contract resulted in collaboration between NWAE and seven private agencies that provide specialized recruitment for identified children on a fee-for-service basis. By the end of the first year, 26 children have been placed into identified permanent homes, with several placements pending. Six of the original 40 children identified were removed from the program after determining that adoption was not the most appropriate plan, the child did not meet the program requirements, or the social worker decided to withdraw the child from the project. Decisions for withdrawal from the project varied from not wanting to cooperate with the private agencies to not wanting to have a child moved out of the county or state.

### **Adoption Consortiums**

Each region continues to convene adoption consortiums. These consortiums provide a collaborative staffing process between the department and private agencies to increase awareness of children in need of adoptive families and approved adoptive families waiting for placements. Consortiums promote inter-

regional linkages on behalf of children and have resulted in an increase in the number of children registered with the adoption exchanges.

### **Purchase of Service**

The Children's Administration increased the Purchase of Service (POS) budget for FY 2002. This contract provides private agencies in and out of state with financial assistance to offset the actual costs for the recruitment, placement, and finalization of a child into an adoptive home. This funding is essential in the placement of children that might not otherwise be able to be placed due to fees that an agency may charge for the placement of children. During FY 2002, there were over 40 requests for POS fees made, resulting in 18 contracts. Eleven of these contracts are with agencies in other states.

### **Federal Adoption Incentive Funding**

Washington again exceeded the baseline for finalized adoptions for federal fiscal year 2001. CA used the award money to enhance regional projects designed to increase the number of finalized adoptions in Washington. CA spent a small portion of the money to contract with the Office of the Attorney General (AAG) to hire an AAG to process the backlog of children waiting for termination hearings in Clark, Cowlitz, and Skamania counties. The contract resulted in an increase in the number of termination petitions filed with the court and the number of hearings and or relinquishments, thus removing a barrier to permanency.

### **Family Home Study**

During this past fiscal year, CA staff has completed work on the continuous quality improvement project for developing a consistent format for completing home studies for foster parents, adoptive parents, and relative caregivers. The new forms and format has been piloted in seven offices around the state for six months. The results of the pilot are pending at this time. There is much support for the new format from staff and from other CA initiatives (accreditation, kinship care and Adoption and Safe Families Act compliance).

## **VII. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

The Children's Administration is committed to improving services to foster and adoptive families, retaining foster parents, and providing services to children and families. Some of CA's plans for the future include:

- ★ Implementing the Family Home Study for foster parents, relatives, and adoptive parents statewide, pending results and management and union approval.

- ★ The television station KBTC in Tacoma will be airing the award-winning Journey through the Healing Circle project as a two-hour special on PBS.
- ★ Requiring training for foster parents and staff who work with Sexually Aggressive Youth (SAY) and Physically Aggressive Youth (PAY).
- ★ Continuing collaboration with Casey Family Program and other stakeholders to improve our partnership with foster parents.
- ★ Development of a DLR methods and practices guidebook to serve as a comprehensive practice guide for staff in decision-making and consistency in practice. The guidebook will provide staff with skills and expertise on the consistent application of WAC and policy.
- ★ Completion of the electronic interface with the DSHS Medical Assistance Administration's Medical Management Information System (MMIS). This interface will allow the CA to efficiently collect vital information on children coming into placement from public assistance households. Examples of the type of information that will be collected include diagnosis codes, a history of health care providers, and medications prescribed. This will significantly streamline the Passport creation process for these children.
- ★ Release of the CA Adoption webpage.
- ★ Implementation of the revised CA implemented statewide Foster Care Respite policy. This policy provides foster parents with paid time away from children in their care for up to two weeks per year.